

Period. 2006
v. 19
1907-08

ANDOVER-HARVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

THE
Union Seminary Magazine

VOL. XIX OCTOBER—NOVEMBER, 1907 No. 1

***CAN COSMO-THEISTIC EVOLUTION ACCOUNT
FOR CHRISTIANITY?**

BY REV. HARRIS E. KIRK, D. D., BALTIMORE, MD.

The object of this lecture is to discuss the question whether the philosophy of cosmo-theistic evolution can account for Christ and Christianity and at the same time reject the traditional or supernatural explanation. It is proposed to give some reasons why this question cannot be answered in the affirmative. I recognize that this is only a piece of negative criticism. It makes no effort to prove the traditional view. But it is hoped that the development of the argument may show some reasons why the supernatural conception is still the most satisfactory explanation of our historic religion.

It is not required in your presence to say that the hypothesis of evolution has been an important and fruitful conception of modern thought. Your familiarity with the subject makes it unnecessary to enter in detail into its various relations to the problem of supernatural religion. It is proper, however, to observe that the application of evolution to theological questions has usually resulted in the denial of the supernatural basis of Christianity; and this makes it important to consider the phases through which this mode of denial has passed, in order to appreciate precisely the form of philosophy, described as cosmo-theistic, with which we have to deal.

*A lecture delivered before the students of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va., January 8, 1907.

Missionary

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS FROM 100 TO 690 A. D.*

BY PROF. T. C. JOHNSON, D. D., LL. D.

In our treatment of this history we shall attempt not to reproduce it, but to set forth some of its more important features and developments; to compare its developments with New Testament principles; and to test them by their fruits. However humble the effort to study missionary history philosophically, if to any degree the philosophizing be sane and sober, it must eventuate in practical good, guarding us against error and anchoring us to the truth. Hence the character of this attempt.

The long course of missionary history naturally falls into several divisions. In the study of these divisions of the missionary movement severally, we shall keep the following questions prominently before us: What was the theoretical grasp of Christianity prevailing in the period and determining the character of the missionary effort? What was the prevailing missionary aim? What respect did the workers pay to the principles set forth in the Acts of the Apostles to regulate the mission effort of the Church? What instrumentalities did they use in their work? What methods did they employ? The great missionaries of the period? The common missionaries of the period? The numbers won? The territory over-run?

So much for the plan to be followed; now, let us to the handling of *Christian Missions from 100 to 590*; and, as the year 311 was epochal in the missionary movement as in other branches of Church history, dividing the movement into two periods, each having markedly distinguishing features, let us take up *first*, the period 100 to 311, *the Sub-Apostolic and Ante-Nicene age*.

The theoretical grasp of Christianity which prevailed during this period was substantially like that of the Apostolic age. Various heretical teachers. Anti-Trinitarian, Gnostic, Montanis-

*One of a series of lectures, others of which may be published later.

tic, arose; but the Anti-Trinitarians and Gnostics were excluded from the Church and won, after all, only small bodies of followers. The Montanists, whose false teachings struck less at that which is essential in Christianity than the others, were quite as much schismatics as heretics. Certain false practices, and subsequently the false theories back of them, of these Gnostics and Manicheans, were indeed to creep surely, if slowly, into the Church. But this influence is to be seen rather in the periods following 311 than in the one now before us. In the thought of some Christians, evangelical repentance was being substituted by penance; godly sorrow with endeavor after new obedience, by an effort to render satisfaction for sin, by confession, sighs, and tears and sackcloth; which is to say, that in the thought of some work-righteousness was beginning to creep in. Vagueness of conception and looseness of doctrinal grasp were the general characteristics of Christians. Nevertheless, in the main, a sound, if unscientific, view prevailed of man's hopeless condition if left to himself, and of salvation by the gracious work of the triune God. Men magnified the power of a living faith in the risen Lord. They longed to see this faith universal but believed that Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but that God alone must give the increase.

Naturally the aim of a Church with such a faith, in its missionary work was much like that of the Apostolic Church. It too sought to win true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It sought, in addition, men so possessed of the Christian faith and the Christian spirit that they would declare their testimony in the face of all persecution, even unto death. This period is the classic age of the Church under oppression. The ancient heathen priesthoods and the imperial power and the animosity against God natural to man's heart, were pitted unitedly against Christianity. Throughout most of the period persecution was raging in some quarter or other of the Empire against Christians. Sometimes the persecutions were widespread. This bitter opposition and the probability that the new convert would soon have to face the fires of persecution made the Church prevalently desire only those who were believed to be thoroughly devoted to Christ. The persecutions

helped to prevent the Church from desiring merely nominal converts; and thus bolstered up the motives springing from an intelligent apprehension of the true genius of Christianity. Thus, it aimed to secure true witnesses for Christ and his cause.

. It cannot be safely asserted that there was much consciously strategic planning of the work in any large way; but there was some of it as will appear in the sequel. As for the immediate missionary work of the rank and file, it was well directed, terminating upon the people with whom the Christians severally came into the closest contact. Within the limits fixed by their poverty, and their mental cultivation and intellectual grasp, they, in practice, applied well the principles laid down in the New Testament for the Church's guidance in its efforts to spread the faith.

The word of God in the Old Testament, and in such books of the New Testament as circulated in any particular quarter of the Church, and this word as preserved in tradition was the one instrument in general use. That word, preached, privately taught and lived by the disciples, was used by the propagators of the faith with absolute confidence. There was some use made by learned teachers of heathen utterances, but in such a bird's-eye view as this we are taking, this is hardly to be noticed. The word of God was universally regarded and applied by the Christians of the time as the effective instrument.

As to the methods employed in this period: *The Evangelistic* was the chief method. Ministers preached the glad tidings. The Christian men and women severally talked and lived the glad tidings. The literary method, also, was employed extensively, as is proven beyond peradventure by the translations of Scripture which have come down to us from that early age. Amongst these are the Peshito and Curetonian Syriac versions for Syria and Mesopotamia; the Memphitic, Thebaic and Bashmureic for Egypt and the Upper Nile Valley; the North African and Italian-Latin version for Carthage and Rome. Copies of the Scriptures were multiplied in the Greek, which prevailed so widely. The literary method in missionary endeavor was applied in the production of letters, expositions of the faith,

pleas for the faith, defenses of the faith, the "Apologies," etc. It is, perhaps, not far-fetched to say that in Alexandria we see an instance of the educational method in missions, in the catechetical school which, at the outset, was a school in which inquirers and neophytes were taught the simplest elements of the gospel, but which was soon developed into a college of divinity and evangelistic work, and in which Christians were trained to meet the representatives of the heathen systems. The school became an important source of mission workers. Other methods may have been employed, but the evidence that they were is not conspicuous.

There were some missionary workers prominent enough to leave their names dimly written on the pages of history. No one of them stands out as Paul's in the preceding age, or as the name of Patrick, or Columba, or Augustin in the next period. Of these, one was Pantaenus. He was the first teacher of the catechetical school of Alexandria whose name has come down to us. He is sometimes represented as the founder of that school. Previous to his conversion, he had been a Stoic philosopher. He was highly esteemed for his services to Christianity by his contemporaries. Eusebius asserts that "Pantaenus is said to have showed such a willing mind towards the publishing of the doctrines of Christ, that he became a preacher of the gospel unto the eastern Gentiles, and was sent as far as India. For there were," continues Eusebius, and for what follows he vouches—"there were there many evangelists prepared for this purpose, to promote and to plant the heavenly word with godly zeal, after the guise of the Apostles. Of these, Pantaenus being one, is said to have come into India, where he found the Gospel of Matthew written in the Hebrew tongue, kept of such as knew Christ, which was preached there before his coming by Bartholomew, one of the Apostles, and as they report revered there unto this day."* Whether by India was meant the peninsula now known by that name, or Ethiopia, or the Upper Nile country, or Arabia, is uncertain; but it is not a matter of importance in this connection. The uncertainty does not touch the fact that Pantaenus and "many evangelists" were going out to missionary work.

According to the French historian, Gregory of Tours, seven missionaries came into as many quarters of France about 250; and founded churches. One of these was Dionysius, the first bishop of the community where now is Paris. According to Gregory's account, Dionysius suffered death, at his mission post, during the Aurelian persecution. Another of the seven was Saturnin, one of the most famous missionaries and martyrs of the third century. He is represented to have been a native of Italy; to have been sent as a missionary to Gaul by the bishop Fabian; to have settled at Toulouse; to have labored with much success; and to have been killed by an infuriated mob between 250 and 260.

Other names might be laboriously transcribed, but little besides, of these ancient missionaries; unless, we should take as essentially a missionary such a man as Irenaeus, of Lyons. The accounts of their labors have perished: but Eusebius' reference to the "many evangelists" of Pantaenus' day prepared to promote and to plant the heavenly word with godly zeal after the guise of the Apostles," shows that not a few gave themselves up wholly to propagating Christianity. While remote cities and countries received some of these workers, the villages and towns within the immediate influence of the more important cities which previously had been made centers of Christianity, received a still greater number of them. Origin informs us that city churches sent their missionaries to the neighboring villages in his day.†

But the great mass of the missionary work of the period was done by humble Christians who had no official title in the Church, and whose names have been lost utterly to the memory of man though treasured in the Lamb's Book of Life. The Church grew so, because the rank and file were possessed with the missionary spirit. Almost every Christian believer was a missionary and was aflame with love for Christ and with zeal for his cause. Justin Martyr meets a venerable old man walking on the sea-shore. They fall to talking. Justin is con-

*Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V., Chap. IX.

†Compare Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. II., p. 21.

verted to Christ and becomes a valued defender and propagator of Christianity. "Every Christian laborer," says Tertullian, "both finds out God and manifests Him, though Plato affirms that it is not easy to discover the Creator, and difficult, when he is found, to make him known to all."

Celsus jeered at Christianity, because he saw in mechanics, rustics, and ignorant persons, its earnest propagators. The people were full of it—as full as shipwrecked sailors are of the story of their rescue. They loved to talk of it; and did talk of it. The merchant traders talked of it on their travels; the soldiers on their marches and beside their camp fires. Neighbor talked of it to neighbor, father to son and to daughter and to wife and to servant; the parents talked of it to their children, and the children talked of it to their parents. Slaves talked of it to their fellow-slaves and to their masters and mistresses. No matter how humble a man might be, the possession of Christianity gave him a subject of such worth that on it he could speak to the greatest. It was the very greatest thing that had ever come into the life of man. It sweetened all life, however sordid otherwise; it had robbed death of its sting. The very martyrs at the stake sang it, prayed it, talked it, lived it, gloried in it, rejoiced in dying for it. The Christian rank and file, busied in their various occupations, called in question by the civil authorities for practicing a new religion, in dungeons, at the stake,—were the most effective agents in the spread of Christianity in the Ante-Nicene period. Oh, for a revival of this irrepressible, aggressive type of Christianity among our rank and file of Christians!

The number of Christians increased with very great rapidity throughout the period. According to conservative estimates, at the close of the Apostolic age the number of adherents to Christianity had not reached five hundred thousand. At the accession of Constantine, the Christians numbered ten or twelve millions. To put the matter in another way: At the death of the Apostle John, only one man in two hundred and forty within the limits of the Roman Empire was a professing Christian, whereas on the adoption of Christianity by Constantine as the religion of State, about every tenth or twelfth man in the Empire was a nominal Christian.

The missionary triumphs of Christianity were a matter which thrilled the early Apologists. About the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr asserts that there is "no race of men, whether of barbarians or of Greeks, or bearing any other name, either because they lived in wagons without fixed habitations, or in tents leading a pastoral life, among whom prayers and thanksgivings were not offered up to the Father and Creator of all things through the name of the crucified Jesus."

About 200, Tertullian says in his address to the heathen: We are a people of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you—cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum! We leave you your temples only. We can count your armies; our numbers in a simple province will be greater."

The rapid and healthful growth of the Church in this period is an undisputed fact. In the first three hundred years of its growth it won a good tenth of the population of the Empire; and it so impressed some of the leading statesmen of the times that they naturally looked to its adoption as the State religion.

The territory overrun by the Christians had grown less fast than the number of Christians, but still very fast. Christian communities were found by the close of this period, on the east in Mesopotamia, Persia, Media, Parthia, and Bactria, and even in remote India. To the southward, having gained a strong foothold in Egypt, the Church extended up the Nile to Nubia and Abyssinia. It flourished greatly in North Africa. It was planted and had made large growth in Gaul, Spain and Britain before the end of the period. Christians had crossed the Rhine and made converts among the German barbarians before the era of Constantine.

The mission spirit of the Church was splendid. The Church of the time was not rich in this world's goods. It was poor and oppressed. It included no large percentage of the learned and the great. In some respects, it was still the Church's day of small things; but the believers generally took it as their great business to witness for Jesus. The blessing of God rested on their witnessing. The gospel was carried throughout the

civilized world of the day—the limits of the Roman Empire, and beyond its bounds.

Let us now review rapidly the missionary life of the next period, the period of 311 to 590, *the Nicene and Post-Nicene Age of the Church*.

I. The theoretical view of Christianity which prevailed early in the period was different in important respects from that which prevailed in the preceding and in the Apostolic age. Certain evil germs planted in the Church in the period just left, some of them sown by heretics who had themselves suffered excommunication, had flourished and brought forth much fruit of their kind. In the eyes of the Church at large human works were assuming a large place as over against divine grace; the highest human holiness was regarded as dependent largely on human works, and upon human works of an *ascetic* character; the symbolic nature of baptism was obscured and, in the eyes of most the ordinance was absolutely perverted into a magical rite. It was believed universally that, if he who had administered baptism did it with proper intention, and if he who received it did not determine that he would not receive its virtue and if he were not in mortal sin, such as adultery or murder, unrepented of, his soul would be washed white and clean from guilt, and his character would in the same instant be miraculously strengthened for the good. That is to say, the theory of baptismal regeneration prevailed almost universally. The doctrine of the Christian minister was rapidly changing, giving, in the place of the New Testament minister, a *priest*, with prerogatives over against the private members of the Church like those enjoyed by heathen and by Jewish priests. The idea of the universal spiritual priesthood of all believers passed away to be resurrected only at the Reformation. The churchly functions once exercised by the people at large or by chosen officers were regarded as of right to be exercised by the special priesthood only.

The growth of the evil seeds planted in a better age was favored by the rapid movement of current events, which swept Christianity from the condition of a persecuted religion into the saddle as the religion of the State. This great change in the external condition of the Church intoxicated and secularized

it. Unconsciously, perhaps, but nevertheless truly, it further changed its very theoretical grasp of itself to suit the demands of its new formal ally the State.

II. As to the *aim* which inspired the missionary of this period: while not wholly unlike that of the Apostolic age, it was largely unlike it. The aim of the missionaries in the period was more and more to gather in nominal Christians without much concern as to whether they were true believers or not. This change in the aim came in part, at least, from the change in the theoretical grasp of the Christian system. Believing that men not in mortal sin unrepented of, and not opposing a volition against receiving good from the rite, would be cleansed of all guilt by baptism, and renewed in heart; believing that should these baptized fall into sin again, there were other ordinances in the hands of the special priests with which they could be efficiently restored; and believing that baptism was necessary to salvation, they became exceedingly desirous not to win spiritual believers but to get men under the sacramental manipulations of the priests, to make them the subjects of baptism, penance, etc., etc. Thinking that the application of the sacraments was essential to the salvation of any individual, they laid themselves out to secure that application. Possessed of a legalistic, external, priestly and magical conception of Christianity, the missionaries were satisfied with conformity to Christian customs and a reception of the Christian sacraments. They sought in their converts not for an effective addition to the army of witness-bearers. They wished to save units. The clergy would bear the witness. They wished to get the people within the sphere within which the sacraments worked, that they might be hoisted heavenward.

III. As little attention was paid to the New Testament missionary aim by the mission workers of the age, so little attention was paid to the New Testament principles for regulating missionary endeavor. There was little strategic planning of such a sort as to impress itself on the mind of man save in the efforts constantly made to get the hands of the priests first on the heads of the leaders of such tribes as the representatives of the Cross came in contact with. The Churchman had put his meddling hand on so many features of Apostolic teaching in the

effort to improve them that the principles of the propagation of the gospel current in the Apostolic age had been largely lost to view. An occasional Christian, indeed, held pretty closely to the principles of the preceding ages; and bits of work here and there were conducted in the old way. But such was the exception.

IV. The word is no longer the sole instrument in general use by the missionaries. Bribery, in veiled or open form, was in frequent, almost common, use. Constantine the Great seems to have practiced it openly. His example would be largely followed in his own day. Evidence is not wanting that great Church dignitaries used similar weapons to forward ecclesiastical interests, including conversions. The emperors generally showed more favor to Christians than to pagans. There were popular outbursts against not only the grosser and more impious heathen cults, but against cults generally. The physical sword, as well as the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, was used. *Ad hominem* attacks on the heathen religions and every other weapon deemed likely to prove effective was, on occasion, put into use; it having come to be the belief of the age—a belief in which even the great Augustine concurred—that it was the duty of the Christians to compel men to come into the Church even at the cost of using physical force.

V. As to the methods employed by the propagators of the gospel during the period 311 to 590:

1st. The Evangelistic Method was used. That is, some lived and preached an evangel. But the gospel was presented in an increasingly paganized form. The missionaries rarely carried the pure gospel. By their interpretations and traditions they gave the gospel sacramental, external, legalistic and ascetic, overlappings. They mixed with it not a little of revamped heathenism.

2nd. They used the medical arm often, having larger knowledge of the crude healing art of the time than the people amongst whom they labored. Not unfrequently they claimed to use miraculous power to heal; and seem often to have fooled a credulous people, counting it proper to deceive if thereby they could add to the praise and reputation of the Church.

3rd. The Literary Method was in use. Ulfilas, for example, gave to the Goths the Scriptures in their own tongue. Miesrob gave the Armenians a Bible in their own tongue. Jerome gave the Latin speaking peoples a more perfect translation than they had hitherto enjoyed, in the Vulgate. Commentaries, expositions, apologies, Polemical treatises, religious work of various worthy kinds, were produced. Legends of saints, angels, and wonder-working relics, intended to advance the worship of these creatures, were multiplied, and became the most popular literature of the age.

4th. The Educational Method was little practiced. In the East, the catechetical and theological school previously established at Alexandria was kept up during the earlier portion of this period. A similar school flourished during a portion of the period at Antioch; later, another at Edessa; and another at Nisibis. In these schools, preparation for the ministry became the uppermost aim. In the West, there were smaller diocesan seminaries whose purpose was the same. There was no adequate stress placed on teaching as a method of gospel propagation. The current civilization was becoming effete and at the same time was being swept away by the incoming flood of barbarians. The time did not favor education; the very bishops, presbyters, missionaries, had little of it as a rule; the changed conception of the ministry, substituting for the heralds of the gospel the priest with magical power, made education of the clergy seem unnecessary; and much more, education of the people unnecessary from a merely religious point of view.

5th. In applying the instruments of bribery and the physical sword, almost any method was practiced that appeared to promise success. The Churchmen aimed to win the strong man—the man in civil and military position—to their view. They frequently left it to his arbitrary will to choose the way in which he would herd those under him to the Baptismal fount and to the priestly hands.

VI. Some of more distinguished mission-workers of the time were Ulfilas amongst the Goths; Gregory and Miesrob amongst the Armenians, whose labors resulted in quite a general spread of Christianity in Armenia; Frumentius and Ede-sius in Abyssinia; humble, simple-hearted, self-sacrificing and

efficient Patrick in Ireland; and Columba in Scotland. Stories have come down showing that here and there the old ideals had not utterly perished; and that an occasional earnest child of God by a godly walk and conversation turned the minds of neighbors to Christ.

The chief mission work of this period was home mission work. Every considerable section of the empire had been penetrated by Christianity as early as 311; but not over one-tenth, perhaps, of the population had become adherents thereto at that date. In the period beginning with the union of Church and State, the other nine-tenths remained to be handled. The ministers of religion had, every one, abounding opportunities for mission work. Nor is there reason for doubting that they had zeal of a sort; nor that they inducted vast numbers into the external religion into which they had so largely perverted Christianity.

VII. It is impossible even to conjecture the number of adherents added. By 590 there had come a vast decrease in the population within the bounds of the once West Roman Empire. Cities, towns and villages had been destroyed. The old population had been decimated over and over by successive waves of barbarians, had suffered from the want of all things to the point of extinction, in many quarters. The incomers had supplied their places only very partially at first, and had not multiplied rapidly owing to their ever-recurring wars on each other. In all Christendom there may have been thirty or thirty-five millions of adherents to the prevailing paganized Christianity. Some have estimated the number of Christians in 814 at thirty-five millions. This date is after the Roman missionizing of England under Augustin and his followers, after the work of Boniface and his co-laborers among the Germans, and after Charlemagne's work as a converter by force. But in 814, the Mohammedans had reduced the number of Christians in the East and in North Africa by as much as it had gained in the West between the years 590 and 814. All things considered, it is not probable that there were more Christians at the end of Charlemagne's reign than at the end of the papal reign of Gregory I. The adherents in this age were largely nominal and external Christians. The Church had largely divorced morals

from religion. Paganization had meant secularization for the great mass.

VIII. The territory within which Christianity prevailed had been considerably augmented by 590. Beyond the bounds of the ancient Graeco-Roman Empire, Christianity had overrun Abyssinia, made inroads into Arabia and Persia, overrun Armenia, made conquests to the north of the Danube, and overrun Ireland and portions of Scotland.

The Nestorians showed considerable missionary activity not only in this, but in the next period. As they separated from the Graeco-Latin Church prior to 590, it is convenient to indicate at this point, once for all, their missionary career. Differing from the Graeco-Latin Church in denying that Mary was the mother of God, in repudiating the use of images and the doctrines of purgatory and transubstantiations, and in holding a more simple worship, they were driven out of the bounds of the empire; and found an asylum in Persia, and were favored by Persian kings.

They spread from Persia with great missionary zeal into Arabia, India, China and Tartary, establishing schools and hospitals, and ennobling the civilizations of the peoples amongst whom they labored.

A certain Nestorian monk, Sergius, is supposed to have given Mohammed his imperfect knowledge of Christianity. The sect received many privileges at Mohammed's hands, and exerted an influence on Arabian culture; and upon the development of science and philosophy amongst them. According to tradition, the Nestorians made converts among the Tartars in the eleventh century. They had previously spread into China.

The Nestorian Church in the thirteenth century was quite extensive. But persecutions came upon them, and they were crushed. They have maintained themselves, however, in Armenia and in the wild mountains and valleys of Kurdistan and in India.